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## Some asylum seekers dropped off in Shreveport reportedly were not allowed to call their families

"ICE is required to allow immigrants to call their families to let them know they're getting out"



(Source: Gray TV file photo)

By Destinee Patterson

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SHREVEPORT, La. (KSLA) — It's been four days since ICE dropped off 20-30 Haitian immigrants in Shreveport.



Greyhound buses brought the two groups to the city's bus station Thursday, July 15 from two ICE detention centers in Louisiana, said Frances Kelley, of Louisiana Advocates for Immigrants in Detention.

Many of them were not allowed to contact family members and, therefore, had nowhere to go once they reached Shreveport, she continued.

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"ICE is required to allow immigrants to call their families to let them know they're getting out. We've had multiple people tell us that was not the case," Kelley said.

"One immigrant was told, 'If you don't get on this bus right now, you'll have to stay here forever' when he asked to call his family to let them know that he was getting out."

All of the immigrants have since been reunited with their families and friends in the United States, Kelley said.

"Once notified of the sudden release, most of their families quickly purchased plane or bus tickets for their loved ones," she added. "A few immigrants whose families could not afford plane tickets received free plane tickets from the nonprofit Miles for Migrants, which helps reunite refugees and asylum seekers with their families."

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People, however, still are taking issue with the lack of support for the asylum seekers.

[U.S. Sen. Bill Cassidy has called it](#) "horrible mismanagement."

In an email, a spokesperson for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement says its "Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO), New Orleans Field Office, is transporting individuals, in accordance with COVID-19 protocols, released from ICE custody to regional airports or bus stations. Individuals released from ICE custody have a transportation and a temporary support plan in place prior to release."

ICE also is "coordinating with non-governmental organizations to ensure individuals have immediate needs such as temporary shelter upon their release, as well as food, water, clothing and transportation services to help mitigate strains placed on resources in the local community," the ICE spokesperson added.



Kelley said the chaotic way in which ICE released asylum seekers at the Shreveport bus station without allowing them to first contact their families is only one example of many similar incidents that have been documented in Louisiana over recent months.

Several of the nine ICE immigration detention centers in Louisiana, many of which are in rural areas of the state, are under federal investigation due to allegations of torture, abuse and medical neglect, Kelley added.

On Friday, July 16, Louisiana Advocates for Immigrants in Detention, Freedom for Immigrants, the Southern Poverty Law Center and several other groups filed a civil rights complaint against ICE for alleged "blatant violations of the ICE Performance-Based National Detention Standards 2011 regarding release protocols in Louisiana and Mississippi, causing serious harm to the well-being and safety of those being released."

The petition says those violations include not allowing immigrants to contact their families prior to being released in order to make travel arrangements and not providing access to interpreters and translated materials to inform them of their post-release transportation options.

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Since late March, volunteers in Shreveport have helped more than 400 immigrants from 42 countries travel to reunite with their families or friends in other states, according to Louisiana Advocates for Immigrants in Detention. Among them were several parents who were reunited with their children after being separated for anywhere from months to years.

***Following is the latest directive on U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's enforcement priorities:***

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Policy Number: 11090.1  
FEA Number: 306-112-002b

*Office of the Director*

**U.S. Department of Homeland Security**  
500 12<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20536



**U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement**

February 18, 2021

MEMORANDUM FOR:

All ICE Employees

FROM:

Tae D. Johnson  
Acting Director

SUBJECT:

Interim Guidance: Civil Immigration Enforcement and Removal Priorities

Purpose

This memorandum establishes interim guidance in support of the interim civil immigration

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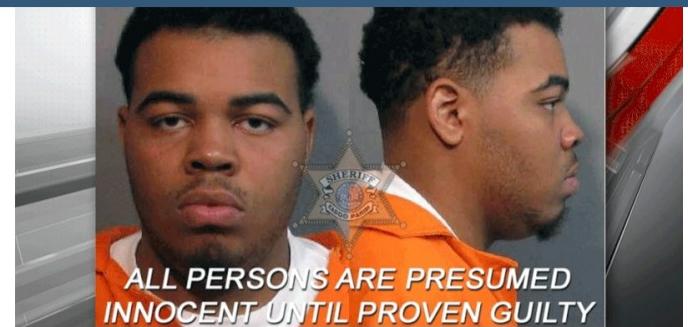


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